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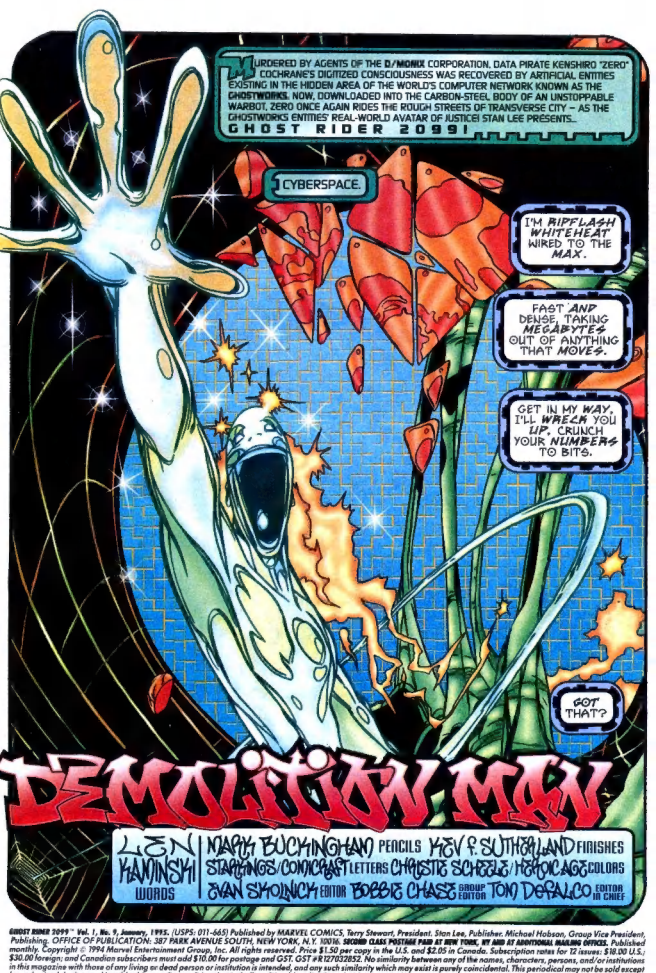
MURDERED BY AGENTS OF THE D/MONIX CORPORATION, DATA PIRATE KENSHIRO "ZERO" COCHRANE'S DIGITIZED CONSCIOUSNESS WAS RECOVERED BY ARTIFICIAL ENTITIES EXISTING IN THE HIDDEN AREA OF THE WORLD'S COMPUTER NETWORK KNOWN AS THE GHOSTWORKS. NOW, DOWNLOADED INTO THE CARBON-STEEL BODY OF AN UNSTOPPABLE WARBOT, ZERO ONCE AGAIN RIDES THE ROUGH STREETS OF TRANSVERSE CITY — AS THE GHOSTWORKS ENTITIES' REAL-WORLD AVATAR OF JUSTICE! STAN LEE PRESENTS...
GHOST RIDER 2099!
CYBERSPACE.
I'M RIPFLASH WHITEHEAT WIRED TO THE MAX.
FAST AND DENSE, TAKING MEGABYTES OUT OF ANYTHING THAT MOVES.
GET IN MY WAY, I'LL WRECK YOU UP. CRUNCH YOUR NUMBERS TO BITS.
GOT THAT?
DEMOLITION MAN
LEN KANINSKI WORDS
MARK BUCHINGHAM PENCILS
KEV F. SUTHERLAND FINISHES
STARKINGS/COMICRAFT LETTERS
CHRISTIE SCHEELE/HEROIC AGE COLORS
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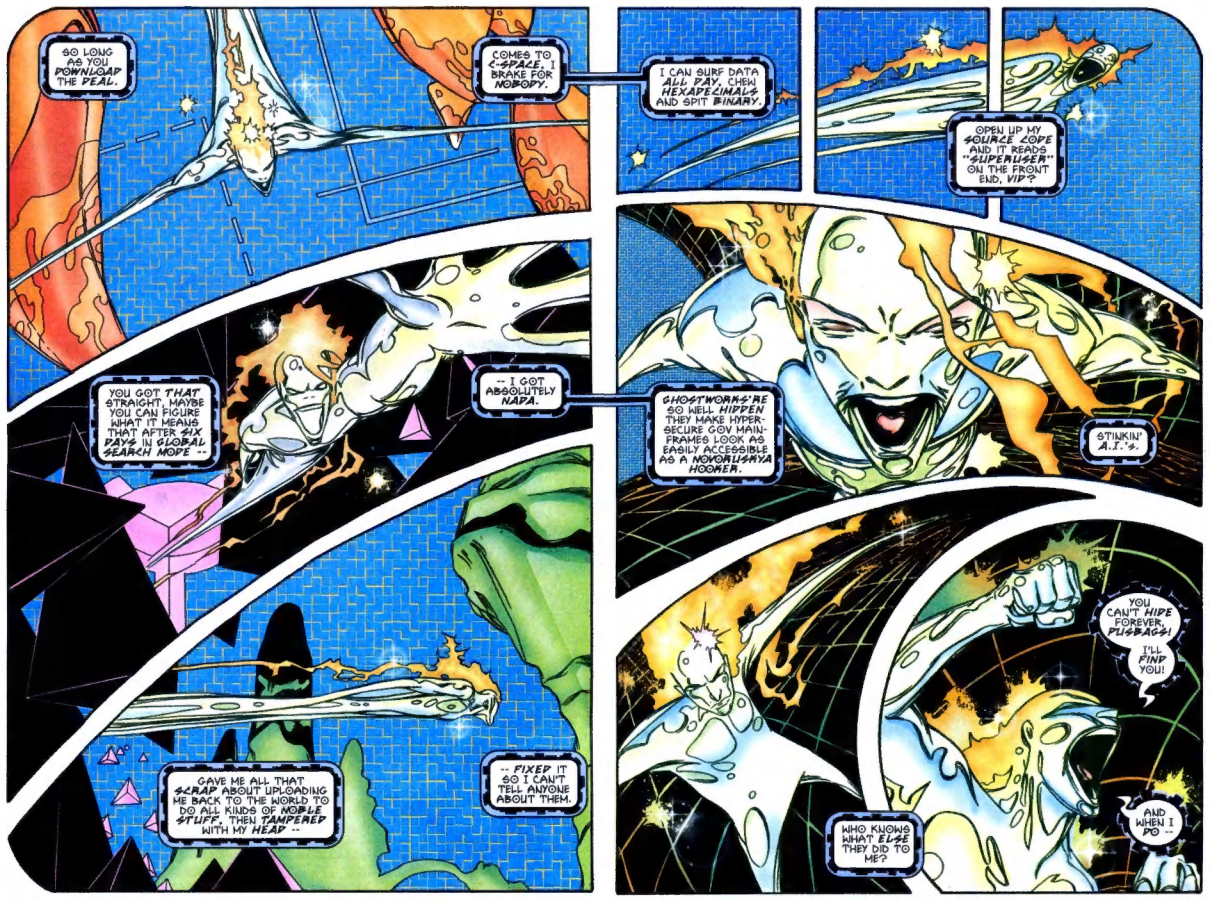
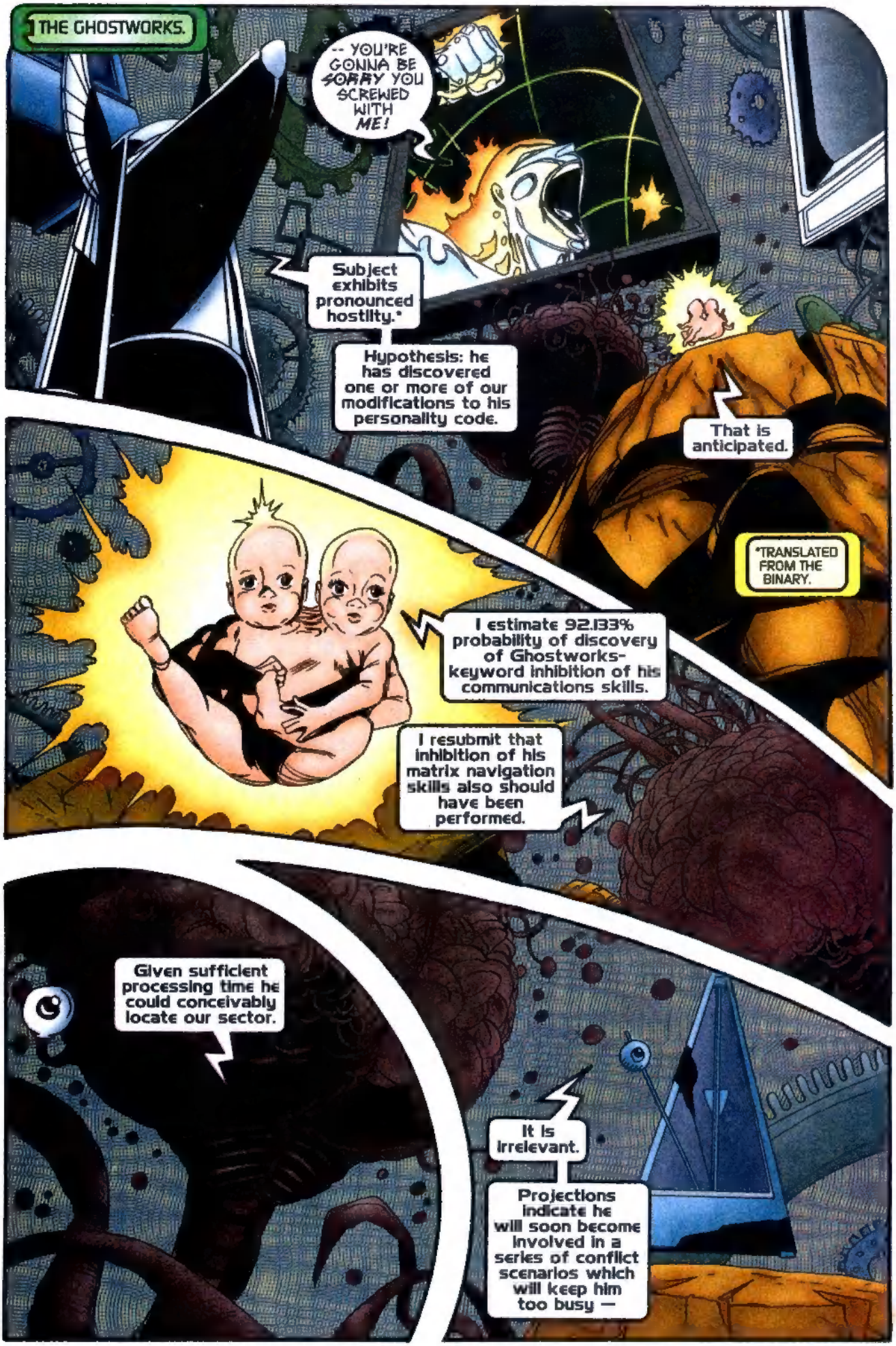
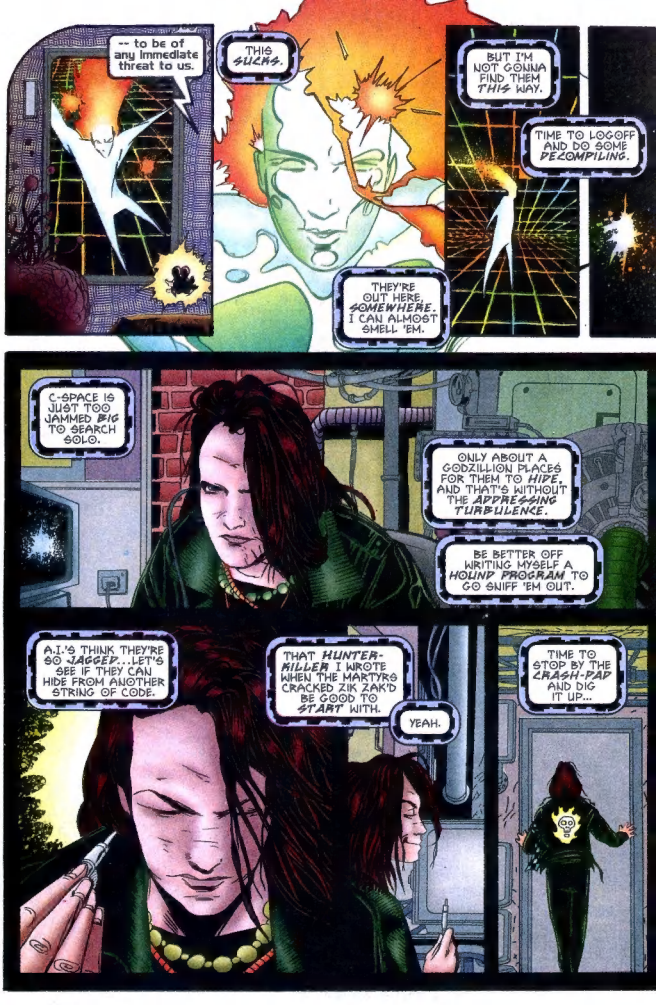
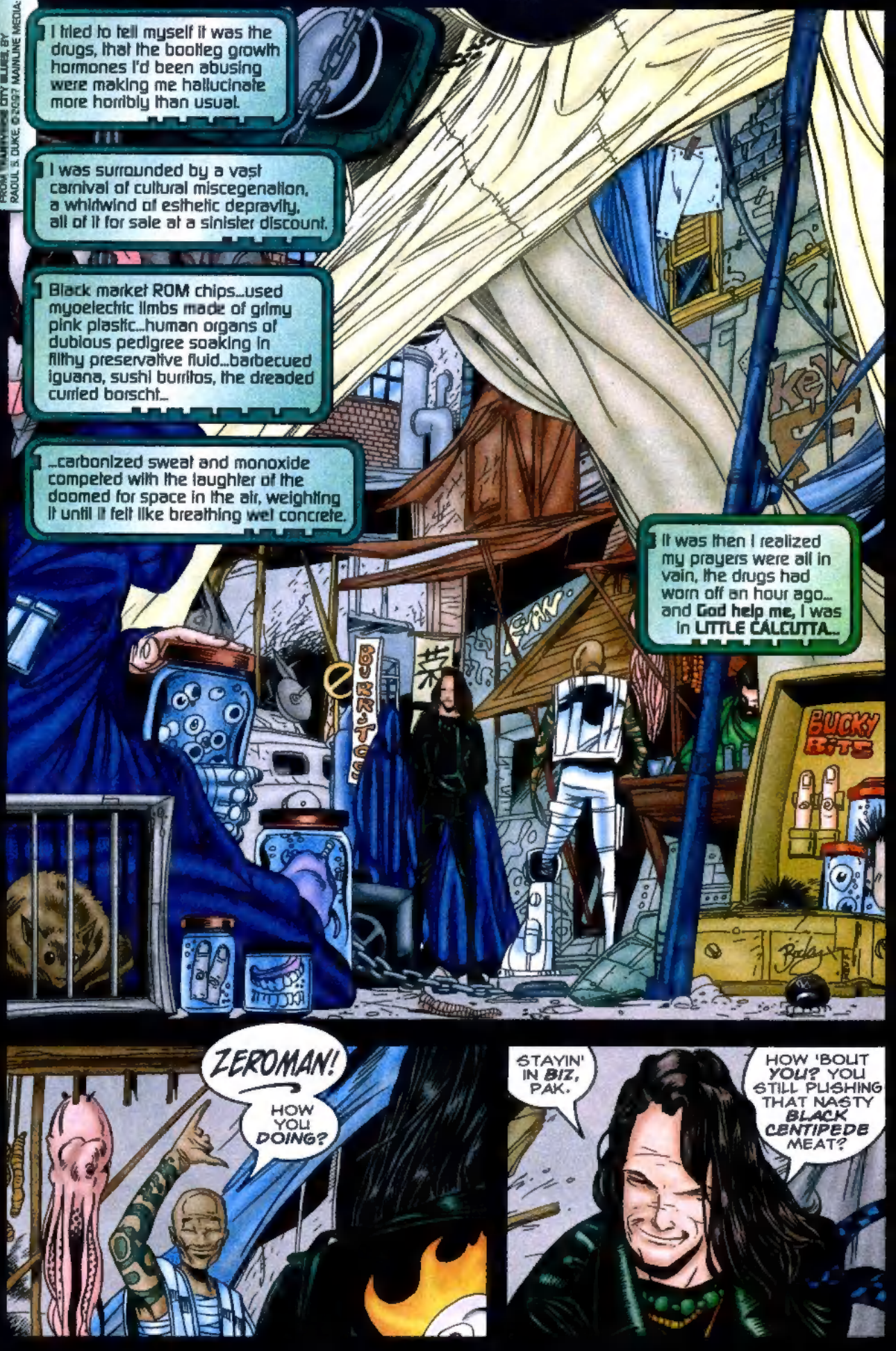

SO LONG AS YOU DOWNLOAD THE REAL.
COMES TO C-SPACE, I BRAKE FOR NOBODY.
I CAN SURF DATA ALL DAY, CHEW HEXADECIMALS AND SPIT BINARY.
OPEN UP MY SOURCE CODE AND IT READS "SUPERUSER" ON THE FRONT END, VIP?
YOU GOT THAT STRAIGHT, MAYBE YOU CAN FIGURE WHAT IT MEANS THAT AFTER SIX DAYS IN GLOBAL SEARCH MODE --
-- I GOT ABSOLUTELY NADA.
GHOSTWORKS'RE SO WELL HIDDEN THEY MAKE HYPER-SECURE GOV MAINFRAMES LOOK AS EASILY ACCESSIBLE AS A NOVORUSSKIA HOOKER.
STINKIN' A.I.'S.
YOU CAN'T HIDE FOREVER, PUSBAG!
I'LL FIND YOU!
AND WHEN I DO --
WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE THEY DID TO ME?
GAVE ME ALL THAT SCRAP ABOUT UPLOADING ME BACK TO THE WORLD TO DO ALL KINDS OF NOBLE STUFF, THEN TAMPERED WITH MY HEAP --
-- FIXED IT SO I CAN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THEM.


THE GHOSTWORKS.
-- YOU'RE GONNA BE SORRY YOU SCREWED WITH ME!
Subject exhibits pronounced hostility.*
Hypothesis: he has discovered one or more of our modifications to his personality code.
That is anticipated.
*TRANSLATED FROM THE BINARY.
I estimate 92.133% probability of discovery of Ghostworks-keyword inhibition of his communications skills.
I resubmit that inhibition of his matrix navigation skills also should have been performed.
Given sufficient processing time he could conceivably locate our sector.
It is irrelevant.
Projections indicate he will soon become involved in a series of conflict scenarios which will keep him too busy —


-- to be of any immediate threat to us.
THIS SUCKS.
THEY'RE OUT HERE SOMEWHERE. I CAN ALMOST SMELL 'EM.
BUT I'M NOT GONNA FIND THEM THIS WAY.
TIME TO LOGOFF AND DO SOME DECOMPILING.
C-SPACE IS JUST TOO JAMMED BIG TO SEARCH SOLO.
ONLY ABOUT A GODZILLION PLACES FOR THEM TO HIDE, AND THAT'S WITHOUT THE APPRESSING TURBULENCE.
BE BETTER OFF WRITING MYSELF A HOUND PROGRAM TO GO SNIFF 'EM OUT.
A.I.'S THINK THEY'RE SO JAGGED...LET'S SEE IF THEY CAN HIDE FROM ANOTHER STRING OF CODE.
THAT HUNTER-KILLER I WROTE WHEN THE MARTYRS CRACKED ZIK ZAK'D BE GOOD TO START WITH.
YEAH.
TIME TO STOP BY THE CRASH-PAD AND DIG IT UP...

FROM TRANSMETROPOLITAN: CITY BLUES, BY RAOUL S. DUKE. ©2007 WAINLINE MEDIA.


I tried to tell myself it was the drugs, that the bootleg growth hormones I'd been abusing were making me hallucinate more horribly than usual.
I was surrounded by a vast carnival of cultural miscegenation, a whirlwind of esthetic depravity, all of it for sale at a sinister discount.
Black market ROM chips...used myoelectric limbs made of grimy pink plastic...human organs of dubious pedigree soaking in filthy preservative fluid...barbecued iguana, sushi burritos, the dreaded curried borscht...
...carbonized sweat and monoxide competed with the laughter of the doomed for space in the air, weighting it until it felt like breathing wet concrete.
It was then I realized my prayers were all in vain, the drugs had worn off an hour ago... and God help me, I was in LITTLE CALCUTTA...
BUKKAKE
BUCKY BITS
ZEROMAN!
HOW YOU DOING?
STAYIN' IN BIZ, PAK.
HOW 'BOUT YOU? YOU STILL PUSHING THAT NASTY BLACK CENTIPEDE MEAT?

HARD TIMES, MY FRIEND.
SUPPLY'S TOUGH TO COME BY EVER SINCE THE SOMOANS CHASED BENWAY TO L-5.
GOT SOME NICE RECOMBINANT TOAD VENOM, THOUGH.
GIVE YOU VERY GOOD PRICE.
Nah, NOT TODAY, PAK.
GOT STUFF TO DO.
HOKAY.
DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND STAY FROSTY.
STRANGE THINGS GOIN' ON.
LOTSA FOLKS LEAVIN' THE NEIGHBORHOOD ON THE BODY BAG SPECIAL LATELY.
JEROME X GOT SHREDDED TWO DAYS AGO -- THEY HAD TO TAKE HIM OFF THE SIDEWALK WITH A SPONGE.
NO GLITCH? JAMMIT, I LIKED HIS STUFF.
WHO WAS IT. THE ANARQUISTADORS? GLASS HAMMERS?
FRESNO BOB, HE SWEARS IT WAS SOME KINDA HORRORSHOW MONSTER WITH METAL TEETH.
FRITOS
HUNNH!
BOB OUGHTA LAY OFF THE SUBSTANCE D. IT'S GIVING HIM A SERIOUS I.Q SHORTAGE.

MAYBE SO, BUT HE AIN'T THE ONLY ONE SAYIN' STUFF LIKE THAT.
WATCH YOUR BACK, VID?
GOT THAT BURNED INTO ROM, 24/7.
CATCH YOU LATER...
LEAST PAK'S GLAD TO SEE ME.
ONLY ONE SO FAR.
KYLIE SURE AS SHOCK WOULDN'T GIVE A GLITCH...
NOT LIKE I CARE WHAT SHE THINKS... NOT AFTER SEEING THE INSIDE OF HER HEAD...
AHH, SCREW IT.
U-STOR-IT
U-STOR-IT WAREHOUSE
DREW
NEVER THOUGHT I'D MISS THIS PLACE...
DOESN'T LOOK ANY DIFFERENT SINCE THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE...
SINCE I GOT BACK FROM THE DEAD.

I KNEW YOU'D BE BACK, COCHRANE.
JUST HAD TO WAIT LONG ENOUGH.
DREW
TOLD YOU YOU WERE JAMMIN' WITH THE WRONG GUY WHEN YOU MESSED WITH ME.
NOW...
TIME TO PARTY.
SHOCKIN' TERRIFIC.
D/MONIX MUST'VE TOSSED THE PLACE AFTER THE MARTYRS GOT GREASED.
CARTED BACK ALL OUR DISKS LOOKING FOR THE ARCHIVE WE BOOSTED.
THIS WAY UP
SHOULDA FIGURED.

CHUCK
DON'T SURF
NOTHING LEFT HERE --
-- 'CEPT A BUNCH OF JUNK...
MAY AS WELL SCRAP IT, MAN.
NO WAY THAT DECK'S GONNA RUN AGAIN.
CHUCK
YOU'RE FULL OF GLITCH, PHRACK.
I CAN KEEP IT HUMMING A LONG TIME YET.
Ah, YOU'RE RIPPED, WAREWOLF.
NOTHING LASTS FOREVER.
MAYBE NOT YOU, 2600 --
-- BUT I PLAN TO.

AW, JEEZ, GUYS...
LEAVE ME ALONE... YOU'RE DEAD ALREADY.
IT'S NOT MY FAULT I DIDN'T GET TO STAY THAT WAY...
DID WHAT I COULD TO...
...TO...
THAT YOUR BLOOD, PHRACK? OR ZEOD'S?
ALREADY GOT WAREWOLF'S ON MY HANDS...
IT'S NOT MY FAULT!
THRAAK
DETONATE

SHAKA
U-STOR-IT
WAREHOUSE
U-STOR-IT
BOOM

MEANWHILE...
AN' NUMBER 27 SAID TO NUMBER THREE, YOU'RE THE CUTEST JAILBIRD I EVER DID SEE...
SKRDTGK
Mm?
HSSSSSSSSS
SHIMATA...
BIUM
BIUM
SKLITCH
HHULK
KRUDT
NGHK
SKRAP
SPLADT
AAUUGH

THE CRASH-PAD...
DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE THAT EASY.
NOT SO TOUGH AFTER A--
KRRNK
KLICH
KRRMPH
SCHNTK
ZKLAK
CLITCH
KLIK
CHNK
VRRT
SOMEBODY DIES.

EM SOURCE DETECTED
PUSBAGS THAT BLEW THAT BHILDING... HIDING BACK THERE...
MORONS. THINK BRICK IS GONNA STOP --
KRANCH
TRANSFORM

WHAT'D YOU THINK, THAT CUTTIN' OFF MY BIONICS'D DO MORE'N SLOW ME DOWN, COCHRANE?
WAS TIME FOR ME TO TRADE UP, ANYWAY.
LIKE MY NEW ONES?
JETER.
SHOULDA GREASED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE.
*IN GR2099
LAST ONE YOU'RE GONNA GET!
BONE MECHANIX CHARGED ME BIG FOR THIS CUSTOM JOB, BUT IT'LL BE WORTH IT --
SLAKAM!
-- JUST TO WATCH YOU BURN!

THOOM
AAAMMMMMM
KA THWACK
YOU SON OF A--
WHANG
I'M GONNA WRECK YOU UP, MAN.
WHEN I'M DONE YOU WON'T EVEN LEAVE A BAD SMELL BEHIND!
WRECK ME?!
SKREEKAAM
WRECK YOU!

KRAMMMMM
KHKRVRR
SHK-CLUNK
SKREEKRAK
SKRAM
HNGHH
GNNNGH
WHRSKREE
AWH

THIS IS IT, PUSBAG! I'M TAKIN' YOU ARREST!
YOH WISH.
TARGETING OPTICA LASER...
AAUUGGH!
ZZRASHP
MY EYES!
SKREEENNKKT
YOH MUST BE READ-ONLY.
DIDN'T LEARN JACK FROM THE FIRST TIME I TOOK YOH DOWN, DID YOU?

THRUMMK
TOTAL SPAZ. CAN'T EVEN CONTROL HIS MACHINES NOW.
YOU RAT BITING PUS BAG SONOFA
KRMKHUK
I'LL GET YOU WRECK YOU
MAKE YOU SUFFER AND
YEAH, RIGHT.
TRYRRR
LET'S SEE THE MECHANIX FIX YOH UP WITH A REPLACE-MENT--
-- FOR THIS.
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE MADE THE MISTAKE OF TAKING ME ON.
LET YOH LIVE, LAST TIME.

ME --
I DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE TWICE.
SKPOPT
FSSSSSS
SKRPHT
BITHEAD.
GUESS THAT'S IT.
CRASH-PAD'S GONE.
FINAL CHUNK OF MY EX-LIFE'S HISTORY.
LEAST I MADE PAYBACK ON THE LAST OLD DEBT.

NEXT: CONCRETE JUNGLE